

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A knowledge base facility which correlates software product data relating to software products installed on a computer with related software agreement data, the knowledge base facility comprising:

5 an independent first database holding a plurality of software product data records;

an independent second database holding a plurality of software agreement data records;

10 linking data which links each of a plurality of said software product data records with one or more corresponding records of said software agreement data records and vice versa, said linking data permitting a user to identify associated data records of said software product data records and said software agreement data records;

15 a query tool that receives and acts on queries from a user for linked data records; and

20 a data outputting facility that outputs records from said software product data records and said software agreement data records in a response to said query tool.

2. The knowledge base facility of claim 1, in which the computer is a mainframe computer.

3. The knowledge base facility of claim 1, in which the computer is a network of computers.

4. The knowledge base facility of claim 1, in which the software product data records comprise inventory data records defining software products that are installed on the computer.

5. The knowledge base facility of claim 1, in which the software product data records comprise usage data records reflecting the usage of the software products installed on the computer over a specified period.

6. The knowledge base facility of claim 1, in which the software product data records comprise both inventory and usage data records.

7. The knowledge base facility of claim 1, in which the software agreement data records comprise records at least some of which are organized as a plurality of fields selected from a group containing:

5       time and date of transaction; name, address, phone number, e-mail address of vendor; description of asset; manufacturer, model, year, options; warranties, contract terms and conditions; and contract information.

8. The knowledge base facility of claim 7, in which the group further includes as software agreement data record fields:

licensing fees, number of persons authorized; MIPS

5 authorized; number of invocations authorized; annual maintenance fees; and product/sub-product identifications.

9. The knowledge base facility of claim 7, in which the linking data includes links to data files containing substantially the entireties of software contract agreements that are associated with one or more of the software product data records.

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10. The knowledge base facility of claim 1, in which the software product data records, on the one hand, and the software agreement data records, on the other hand, are stored in separate databases and the linking data is stored in a respective separate database.

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11. The knowledge base facility of claim 1, including a link data updater which maintains the linking data upon dynamic updating of data records in one or the other or both of said first and second databases.

12. The knowledge base facility of claim 1, in which the linking data contains one-to-many and many-to-many data links.

13. The knowledge base facility of claim 1, in which the linking data is created by one or more of: Soundex Coding, pattern matching, dictionary look-up and/or Fuzzy

Logic.

14. A method for correlating software product data relating to software products installed on a computer with related software agreement data, the method comprising the steps of:

5 receiving with a first software facility the software product data;

receiving with a second software facility the software agreement data;

10 correlating substantially automatically with a third software facility the software product data with the software agreement data; and

outputting results of said correlation with a fourth software facility.

15. The method of claim 14, including performing the method substantially automatically.

16. The method of claim 15, including applying the substantially automatic method to a mainframe computer.

17. The method of claim 15, including applying the substantially automatic method to a computer comprising a network of computers.

18. The method of claim 15, in which the software

product data comprises inventory data defining software products which are installed on the computer.

19. The method of claim 15, in which the software product data comprises usage data reflecting the usage of the software products on the computer over a specified time.

20. The method of claim 15, in which the software product data comprises both inventory and usage data.

21. The method of claim 15, in which the software agreement data comprises a table containing summary information concerning agreements aggregated as various data fields, and the fields are selected from the group containing: time and date of transaction; name, address, phone number, e-mail address of vendor; description of asset; manufacturer, model, year, options; warranties, contract terms and conditions; contract information, licensing fees, number of persons authorized, MIPS authorized, number of invocations authorized, annual maintenance fees, product/sub-product identification.

22. The method of claim 15, in which the correlation of the software product data with the software agreement data is accomplished substantially automatically by a computer in a time period which is less than a tenth of a

5 time period required by a manual process.

23. The method of claim 15, in which the correlating step is carried out so that at least 25% of one of the software product data and software agreement data has been correlated.

24. The method of claim 15, in which the first, second and third software facilities are integrated with one another.

25. The method of claim 20, including developing the software product data with the first software facility.

26. The method of claim 15, in which the third software facility correlates software product names.

27. The method of claim 20, in which the third software facility correlates software products in the software agreement data for which there is no data in the inventory data.

28. The method of claim 20, in which the third software facility correlates all software products meeting user-specified criteria.

29. The method of claim 28, including selecting for

processing by the correlating software, products with usage above or below a user specified level over a user-specified time period.

30. The method of claim 28, in which the user-specified criteria includes software products whose maintenance contracts are within a user-specified time of cancellation or renewal.

31. The method of claim 28, in which the user-specified criteria includes (a) products for which the user has a license agreement and (b) a processor on which products are installed.

32. The method of claim 28, in which the user-specified criteria is at least one location of software products.

33. The method of claim 28, including correlating software agreement data with software products meeting criteria based on a maximum number of MIPS.

34. A substantially automatic system for correlating software product data concerning software products installed on a computer with related software agreement data, the system comprising:

5           a first software facility for receiving the software

product data;

a second software facility for receiving the software agreement data;

10 a third software facility for correlating substantially automatically the software product data and the software agreement data with one another; and

a fourth software facility for outputting results of said correlation.

35. The system of claim 34, in which the computer is a mainframe computer.

36. The system of claim 34, in which the computer is a network of computers.

37. The system of claim 34, in which the software product data is inventory data.

38. The system of claim 34, in which the software product data is usage data.

39. The system of claim 34, in which the software product data is a combination of inventory and usage data.

40. The system of claim 34, in which the agreement data contains a plurality of data fields.



41. The system of claim 40, in which the data fields are selected from a group including:

5       time and date of transaction; name, address, phone number, e-mail address of vendor; description of asset; manufacturer, model, year, options; warranties, contract terms and conditions; contract information, fee structure; number of concurrent users; renewal dates; MIPS authorization; authorized CPUs; product name; and discounts.

42. The system of claim 34, in which the first software facility comprises a data acquisition system including a plurality of software acquisition tools.

43. The system of claim 42, in which the software acquisition tools include an importing tool for importing at least a portion of the software product data.

44. The system of claim 42, in which the data acquisition tools include a facility for sharing a database containing software product data.

45. The system of claim 42, in which the data acquisition tools include a facility which enables a user to manually enter software product data.

46. The system of claim 34, in which the third

software facility comprises a reconciliation and association facility which includes a plurality of software tools.

47. The system of claim 46, in which the reconciliation and association tools include a tool for resolving inconsistencies and mismatches in product names between the software product data and the software agreement data.

48. The system of claim 34, in which the third software facility is effective for correlating at least 25% of the data contained in one of the software product data and the software agreement product data.

49. The knowledge base facility of claim 1, in which the link data updater is enabled to run on a periodic basis.

50. The knowledge base facility of claim 11, in which the link data updater is configured to run continuously to update the linking data.

51. The knowledge base facility of claim 11, in which the link data updater becomes activated in response to alterations to the inventory of software products installed on the computer.

52. The method of claim 15, including updating the linking data upon updating of data records in one or the other or both of said software product data and said software agreement data.

53. The method of claim 52, including activating said updating step on a periodic basis.

54. The method of claim 52, including updating the linking data on a continuous basis.

55. The method of claim 52, including updating the linking data in response to alterations to the software product data or the software agreement data.

56. The method of claim 15, including maintaining the software agreement data on a second computer located remotely from the computer on which the software products are installed.

57. The method of claim 56, in which said software agreement data is representative of industry-wide licensing cost statistics, for being compared to specific software agreement data applicable to the software products installed on the computer.